

Gargia, Finnmark, July 1973

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The following notes on a visit to northern Norway in July 1973 may be of interest, especially as they appear to extend the known range of certain species and also as there is little on record concerning the butterflies of this area in English entomological literature. From the 14th to the 22nd of July I stayed at Gargia, some 15 miles south of Alta in Finnmark, where I joined two Danish entomologists who were making a rather longer visit to the area. My observations make an interesting comparison with Mr Mark Shaw's report of his visit to the same area from 4th to 12th July 1971 (1). The quite substantial differences in our respective experiences serve to underline the effects of weather conditions and the very short season at this latitude, 69 deg, well inside the Arctic Circle.

The habitat falls basically into three parts. To the north of Gargia is the lower wooded and partially farmed land of the Alta river valley, while to the south the land rises steeply to the higher upland plateau above the tree line which comprises most of this region. Thirdly there are the areas of marshland, both above and below the tree line. The tree line is at only about 400 m. and in sheltered dips and hollows above this height snow lies throughout the year. Despite this, on occasion, it can be very hot. I was fortunate as the weather was excellent during my stay, on the last three days the temperature was up in the 80's, nonstop sunshine for 24 hours a day.

The best areas for butterflies below the tree line proved to be the open woodland and the marshy areas. Butterflies above the tree line were generally much less numerous. The high ground above the trees is ridged and undulating with occasional mountains rising to 600 m. or more. It was these mountains which provided the best areas for those species found above the trees. I visited two such mountains, Gronnasen just south of Gargia and Bjornhaugene some five miles further south. While a number of species could be found on both, the intervening lower ground produced not a single specimen.

In all I encountered the following 27 species. The most well represented family were the Nymphalidae with 11 species all but one of which were Argynninae.

Papilio machaon lapponicus Vty. In all some 20 were seen. Their condition ranged from fresh to very worn. All were seen above the tree line, with the largest single concentration when about eight were found flying right at the summit of Gronnasen on one of the few wind free days.

Leptidea sinapis L. About a dozen found in woodland some three miles north of Gargia. No previous records of this species from Finnmark appear to exist, although both Nordstrom (3) and Higgins and Riley (2) show it as reaching this latitude further east.

Pieris napi adalwinda Frhst. Common at lower levels round Gargia. Most of the specimens seen were past their best.

Colias hecla sulitelma Aur. Common on high ground above the trees on Gronnasen and Bjornhaugene with the odd one seen at lower levels. Very fresh when I arrived but mostly worn a week later.

C. palaeno L. Widespread throughout the area. Not so numerous as *C. hecla* above the tree line but much more common at lower levels.

Boloria napaea Hffmsg. One male taken on Bjornhaugene and a small colony found in one locality on Gronnasen. Ssp. *frigida* Warren from this area is described as small, however those I found are large, I would think above average.

B. aquilonaris Stichel. Much more numerous and widespread than *B. napaea*. Found in the same locality but generally more common below the tree line especially in marshland although not exclusively so.

Proclossiana eunomia Esp. Widespread below the tree line but not common. I was too late for this species. All those I found were female and past their best. I suspect it was more numerous a couple of weeks earlier.

Clossiana euphrosyne septentrionalis Nordstrom. Almost over. A few mainly worn specimens still on the wing.

C. selene hela Staudinger. Very common and fresh. Found well above the tree line but mainly at lower levels. By far the most common fritillary below the tree line. A substantial number of specimens were very dark with the black upperside markings suffused.

C. freiga Thunb. I was too late for this species, but found three worn females at high level.

C. polaris Bdv. The most uncommon of the fritillaries found. It seems to occur only at high level. I found one female at the top of Gronnasen and a few others were taken by the others, but mainly during the week before I arrived.

C. chariclea Scheven. The most numerous of the specifically northern species. Quite common at high level on Gronnasen and Bjornhaugene. Fresh when I arrived but very worn by the end of my stay.

C. frigga Thunb. Restricted to marshland mainly below the tree line. I was again too late for this species at its best. Those still on the wing were worn.

C. thore borealis Stdgr. Below tree line, common in shaded woodland areas. Some past their best but good specimens still about.

Aglais urticae polaris Stdgr. A couple in tatters seen when I arrived and a few newly emerged specimens appearing at the end of my stay. I also found three pupae and saw plenty of evidence of larval activity, one clump of nettles stripped bare. The main emergence probably occurred after I left.

Oeneis norna Thunb. This species was uncommon. I never took it but two were taken on Gronnasen by the others while I was there. Perhaps this was not a good year for this species.

O. bore Hb. Much more numerous than *O. norna*. Found in some numbers on the top of Gronnasen with other odd ones at lower levels but not below the tree line.

Erebia polaris Stdgr. Widespread, mainly below the tree line. Usually only found in ones and twos, nowhere numerous.

E. pandrose Borkh. Odd worn specimens at high level. Again I was too late.

Lycaena phloea polaris Courvoisier. Becoming quite numerous along the roadside verges at Gargia during the latter part of my stay.

Palaeochrysophanus hippothoe L. I took two males and one female, each in a different locality. It would seem to be widespread but uncommon. A further female was taken by Hr. Schluter. Ssp. *stiberi* Gerh. is supposed to come from this area, however the two females we took were not of the type illustrated by Higgins & Riley as *stiberi* but of a much darker type similar to those from the Alps, and thus in line the description given by Bretherton (4).

Callophrys rubi borealis Krul. Three worn specimens in woodland at Gargia.

Lyaeides idas lapponica Gerh. The most numerous species encountered, very common and fresh throughout my visit. It must not emerge however, until mid July because, despite its abundance during my stay, Mr Shaw does not record seeing it. It was most numerous on open ground and on roadside verges, and not generally extending above the tree line.

Vacciniina optilete Knoch. Common, but not so numerous as *L. idas*. Also emerges earlier as there was a higher proportion of worn specimens.

Cyaniris semiargus Rott. One female taken at Gargia on 18th July. Not apparently previously recorded from Finnmark, in fact this would seem to extend the known range of this species quite substantially further northward.

Polyommatus icarus Rott. One fresh male taken on 22nd July, my last day. It may have been the first to emerge of the single brood in the far north.

While the above species are those actually observed during my visit, I am aware of certain others also recorded from this locality which it might be helpful to mention here to complete the picture. Mr Shaw (1) took a single *Colias nastes werdandi* Zett. in 1971, the only one I know of from the area. He also found *Erebia disa* Thngb. I think I was too late for this in 1973. Hr. Schluter and his family on earlier visits have also found *Lycaena helle* Schiff. and *Hesperia comma catena* Stdgr. On one occasion they found *Euphydryas iduna* Dalman, although on subsequent visits it has not been found again as far as I know. I have recently heard from Mr Shaw that two Norwegian entomologists Messrs. Luhr and Lund took *Lasiomata petropolitana* F. and *Anthocharis cardamines* L. at the end of June, a couple of weeks before I arrived. The latter is another species not previously known to occur so far north.

The summers in northern Norway during the last few years

seem to have been better than average and this has undoubtedly contributed to a buildup of the butterfly population. It is interesting to speculate whether those species not previously recorded so far north are in fact extending their ranges or if they have been there all the time but at such very low population densities that they have not previously been noticed. The latter seems more likely in some cases.

I appreciated before I went that I was probably going one or two weeks too late for the best of the season and I think this probably proved to be the case, especially as far as the specifically northern species were concerned. However, business commitments precluded an earlier visit and mine still proved very successful.

Finally I would like to record my thanks to Mr Mogens Schluter who made the trip possible by inviting me to join his party at Gargia. His intimate and detailed knowledge of the area and its butterflies ensured that my trip was so successful and so enjoyable.

References

- (1). Shaw, M. R., *Entomologist's Record*, 1971, **83**, 371.
- (2). Higgins, L. G., & Riley, N. D. *A Field Guide to the Butterflies of Britain and Europe*, London 1970.
- (3). Nordstrom, F. *De Fennoscandiska Dagfjarilarnas Utbredning*, Lund, 1955.
- (4). Bretherton, R. F. A Distribution List of the Butterflies (Rhopalocera) of Western and Southern Europe, 1966 *Trans. Soc. Br. Ent.*, **17**, 54.

Warwickshire and Elsewhere, 1973

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January opened with fairly mild weather and, having brushed the dust off my moth trap, I operated it here in the garden on 3rd January. Two *Conistra vaccinii* L. and a single *Erannis defoliaria* Clerck were the only visitors. Towards the end of the month came colder weather with snow on the 20th for the first time this winter at Charlecote.

I had my first outing of the year on the mild evening of 20th February, where in Kings Wood on the Bucks-Beds border the blacklight attracted 35 *Erannis leucophaearia* Schiff., one *E. marginaria* Fab., one *Apocheima hispidaria* Schiff., 5 *Phigalia pilosaria* Schiff. and 2 *Alsophila aescularia* Schiff.

My next trip was to a local Warwickshire wood on the 31st March where I operated two lights off my newly acquired generator. It was a rather cool and windy night and amongst a haul of the usual common *Orthosias* was a very fresh male *Trichopteryx polycommata* Schiff. Light at this same wood on the 7th April failed to produce *polycommata* but did result in a dozen species of macro amongst which *Orthosia populeti* Fab. was very abundant.

On 10th April, I set out north on a long journey to the